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Captain BRITAIN™



**IT'S EASY
TO WEAR
A COSTUME...**

IT'S HARD TO BE A HERO!

Almost déjà vu with the cover, wasn't it? No, we're not running short of ideas – it just seemed the most apt page one to go with, considering the contents of our lead story in *Captain Britain Monthly*, Number Thirteen.

Back in Britain after some globe – and time – trotting, Brian Braddock and his companion, Meggan, have discovered some changes in their absence. Unceremoniously dumped at Braddock Manor by Gatecrasher, they witnessed the unusual sight of Brian's sister, Betsy, as Captain Britain, flying in formation with Captain UK. For so long the Resources Control Executive, now in control of the Manor, had sought the assistance of the nation's hero. When Brian wasn't forthcoming, they fashioned Captain Betsy. It was enough for Brian to cast off his costume and leave the hero work to his sister. The trouble is, *It's Hard To Be A Hero*...

That's something that an alternative Captain – Captain Granbretan – also learns in this issue's text story. And extraordinary powers don't automatically make you a hero anyway, as the Cherubim discover in part three of *Playgrounds and Parasites*.

With more from the Black Knight and Night Raven, your letters, and a report on London's Con '85, that's *Captain Britain* 13. It's only unlucky if you miss it!

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DON'T GO, BRIAN. NOT LIKE THIS...

YOU'VE GOT WHAT YOU WANTED BRIAN'S GONE AND THE RCK HAS TAKEN OVER THE MANOR, SO WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE ME TO BUILD A LIFE OF MY OWN?

YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE, BETSY. YOU'RE WITH THE RCK NOW.

AS A FASHION MODEL? HOW FULFILLING...

BITTER MEMORIES INTRUDE ON A REALITY TOO PAINFUL TO BEAR.



**Captain
BRITAIN**

MEMORIES THAT JUMP INTO FOCUS AS FALTERING CONSCIOUSNESS FAILS.

SPARE ME YOUR PREACHING AND HIGH MORAL VIRTUE, GABRIEL. THAT'S HOW YOU GOT ME TO JOIN S.T.R.I.K.E.'S PSI DIVISION, BUT I WON'T FALL FOR IT AGAIN.

I DON'T WANT TO BE CAPTAIN BRITAIN.

**It's
HARD
to be a
HERO...**

ALAN DAVIS WRITER
ANNE HALFACREE LETTERER
NOEL DAVIS ARTIST
IAN RIMMER EDITOR

AS A FRINGE GROUP WE'RE NOT VERY POPULAR IN CERTAIN INFLUENTIAL CIRCLES - BUT OUR ASSOCIATION WITH A NATIONAL HERO WOULD ENSURE FAVOUR WITH THE R.M.

WITHOUT THE PROTECTION THAT WOULD AFFORD, ALL WE'VE DONE SO FAR - INCLUDING THE SAFETY OF THE WARRIES - WILL BE IN JEOPARDY.

WE NEED YOU, BETSY. YOU SHARE THE POWER.



WHY CAN'T YOU DO IT, LINDA? YOU DID IT ON YOUR OWN EARTH...

BUT MAYBE I COULD BE YOUR PARTNER FOR A FEW MONTHS, AND GIVE YOU THE BENEFIT OF MY EXPERIENCE...

AND WITH A BIT OF LUCK, BRIAN MAY HAVE SEEN SENSE AND COME HOME BY THEN...

I'VE ADAPTED THIS UNIFORM TO MATCH YOUR INDIVIDUAL PSI-RHYTHMS, AND FASHIONED IT IN A MANNER THAT SHOULD SATISFY YOUR SENSE OF STYLE.

NO.

I'M SORRY, BETSY. I'D NEVER INTENDED MY INVOLVEMENT TO BE MORE THAN SHORT TERM.

I HAVE MY OWN LIFE NOW, AND I'D LIKE TO GET BACK TO IT...



OKAY, OKAY! I'LL... GIVE IT A GO...



ANY CHANCE YOU COULD DO SOMETHING WITH MINE, JEEVES? THE HOOD PUSHES THESE BEADS INTO MY SKULL, AND...

NO, I WON'T WEAR IT...

IT BELONGED TO THAT... THAT, IMPOSTER.

SO? HE'S DEAD MEAT NOW. YOU KILLED HIM - PRETTY CONVINCINGLY BY ALL ACCOUNTS. THE SUIT'S SPOILS OF WAR. YOU WON IT, FAIR AND SQUARE.

HAS ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU YOU'RE REALLY SICK, MICHAEL?



YEAH, ALL THE TIME, BUT AT LEAST I'M NOT AFRAID OF WEARING DEAD MEN'S CLOTHES.







...AND OF THEIR KILLER.

SLAYMASTER!

BE CALM, AND YOUR DEATH WILL BE SWIFT AND PAINLESS.

NEVER! I'M NOT JUST A TELEPATH WOMAN. I HAVE POWER. REAL POWER. AND FOR ONCE I'M NOT GOING TO BE AFRAID TO USE IT...

YOUR POWERS ARE INDEED IMPRESSIVE, WOMAN. BUT I ALSO POSSESS AN AMPLIFIER COSTUME, CREATED BY THE VIXEN'S TECHNICIANS TO ENHANCE MY OWN UNIQUE ABILITIES.



...I'M GOING TO ENJOY IT!



WE'LL STOP MESSING ABOUT, SLAYMASTER, AND USE IT!

QUIET, HAG. YOU'RE NEXT!



HAG? NOBODY CALLS THE VIXEN A HAG! KILL HER! CRUSH HER! RIP HER APART.

OUF!



YOU SHALL REGRET YOUR FOUL, WOMAN. NOW YOU WILL SUFFER, AND FEEL PAIN.

MUCH PAIN!

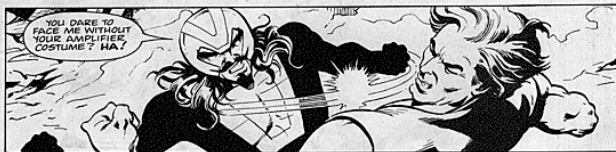
REALITY CAN NO LONGER BE IGNORED...



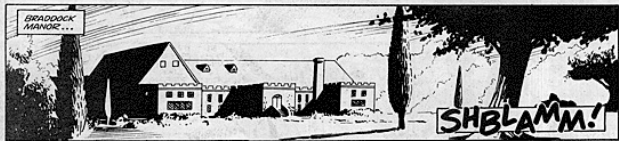
...IT IS CRUEL, AND BRUTAL, AND BLIND.













Next: Should Auld Acquaintance...

WELCOME. I AM A NODE OF THE OMNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE - A KEEPER, A GUARDIAN OF THE TIMELESS HERITAGE THAT SPAWNED ME. I AM A WATCHPOST, A WAY STATION, IN THIS FAN-PLUGGED, BUT EVER MORE TAPERED CONTINUUM. HOWEVER, FOR THE PURPOSES OF YOUR LIMITED MINDS, I AM SIMPLY -

MASTERMIND

Specification Scan N02



Minor Details: Name - Night Raven; Sex - Male; Age - 85 years; Height - 6' 1"; Weight - 8 stones, 3 pounds.

Perhaps not even Night Raven himself remembers the man who donned a bird-like bone mask and became the ruthless dealer of justice in 1930's America. Certainly his true identity never came to light in the course of numerous police investigations. All that is known, is that Night Raven was once a soldier in the First World War and it is thought that his experiences in the trenches unbalanced an already strained psyche.

Whatever his motives, Night Raven's purpose in those early days was clear. He was the avenger of the wronged, a crusader for justice. The motto he left behind after each ritual branding of his victim - a raven imprint burnt into the forehead - was clear and to the point: "Where brooding darkness spreads its evil wings, the Night Raven stings!" For years he was the scourge of the underworld - bootleggers, mob bosses and hitmen all fell prey to his brand of rough justice.

His ruthless campaign may well have continued unabated had he not run foul of a secret society known as the Dragon Tong and its beautiful, yet deadly leader, Yi Yang. Due to Night Raven's intervention in the Tong's affairs Yi Yang lost much credibility in the eyes of her underworld peers. She exacted a horrifying revenge, poisoning him with a substance that corroded both body and mind, endowing unspeakable pain and torment.

For more than a decade, Night Raven endured this living Hell, and whatever fragile strands still bound him to his humanity were swept away. Then, in 1942, Night Raven tracked down the cure to the disease that racked his being, a cure devised by Yi Yang herself. But the cure was a two-edged blade, the pain would at last cease, but he would become a walking plague carrier, bringing death to all he encountered. Rather than endure this fate, Night Raven chose the oblivion offered by cold lead and the murky waters of the East River.

However, that oblivion was short-lived. Night Raven's body knitted and repaired the wounds. Only then did Night Raven realise the full extent of Yi Yang's revenge - with the poison, she had also endowed immortality, condemning him to live forever in unspeakable torment. Night Raven sought out the cure once more, and this time administered it to himself, alone in the snowy wastes of Antarctica. The pain subsided and Night Raven gambled that the threat to human life was a cruel jest on Yi Yang's part. He vowed an even more painful and lasting vengeance upon her.

After several encounters, Yi Yang lured Night Raven to Wisconsin, meaning to trap him there for all eternity. Night Raven, however, turned the tables on her, and her plan dissolved in fiery nuclear wrath. Although Night Raven believed her dead, she survived the explosion - one side of her body heat-blasted and crisped. Now, as well as sharing Night Raven's immortality Yi Yang also shared his agony of survived death, and this experience helped her to a new compassion for the tortured avenger.

The next time she encountered her errant wild child, she tried a different approach - she gave him the artificial means to re-build both the ruins of his body and his life, transplanting him to Mexico City. Like a child with a new toy Night Raven experimented with his new existence, but soon came to realise that he could not live such a lie. Now and forever more he is Night Raven, a creature of darkness and shadow.



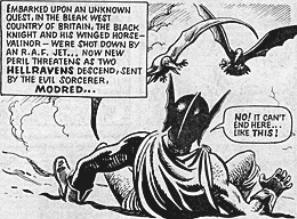
MC56

THE BLACK KNIGHT

Script: Steve Parkhouse

Art: John Stokes

EMBARKED UPON AN UNKNOWN QUEST, IN THE BLEAK WEST COUNTRY OF BRITAIN, THE BLACK KNIGHT AND HIS WINGED HORSE-VALINOR—WERE SHOT DOWN BY AN R.A.F. JET... NOW NEW PERIL THREATENS AS TWO HELLRAVENS DESCEND, SENT BY THE EVIL SORCERER, MODRED...



NO! IT CAN'T END HERE... LIKE THIS!

AT THAT MOMENT, THE HARRIER JET CAME SCREAMING PAST ON ANOTHER RUN...



OH, NO—WE'VE MADE A MISTAKE THAT U.F.O. IT WAS A MAN ON A FLYING HORSE! AND NOW—WAIT—THERE'S A GIANT—



I'M HIT!

KE-RAASH!



MY GOD... ONLY ONE WAY OUT OF THIS...

RAAARK!



EJECT!



WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME WAS THAT THING?

THAT QUESTION IS NOW BURNING IN THE BLACK KNIGHT'S MIND AS THE SECOND CREATURE DIVES TO ATTACK...



VALINOR!

IN A RUSH OF FETID AIR, THE HELLRAVEN SWOOPS... TOO LATE, THE BLACK KNIGHT REALISES HE IS NOT THE PREY... BUT...



STAND FAST NOBLE STEED... NO DARK POWER CAN WITHSTAND THE MIGHT OF THE EBONY BLADE!



IN MERLIN'S NAME... I ATTACK!

MEANWHILE, THE HARRIER PILOT IS BEING WASHED INSHORE ON A DAWN TIDE...

GOOD LORD... DUNNO IF I CAN TAKE THIS BUFFETING... THOSE ROCKS ARE VAGUED ENOUGH TO SNAG MY LIFE JACKET!





STRONG ARMS LIFT HIM FROM THE SEA... A GRIM, SET FACE LOOKS DOWN...

BUT HELP IS AT HAND...



THE FACE OF THE SILENT BEACHCOMBER, KNOWN AS THE STRANGER...



THANKS... I... I THOUGHT I WAS DONE FOR...



WAIT... D-DON'T GO. YOUR NAME. I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME!

BUT THE STRANGER HAD DEPARTED... IGNORING EVEN THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE, AND THE UNEARTHLY SHRIEK THAT SPLIT THE AIR...



RAAARGH!



EVEN IN DEATH, THE HELLRAVEN COULD STING... ITS BLOOD BURNING LIKE ACID...

LORD, WHAT CORRUPTION HAS CREATED A CREATURE SUCH AS THIS?



BE GONE... BACK TO THE DARKNESS THAT SPAWNED YOU!



VALINOR! YOU ARE WOUNDED!



WE MUST TAKE COVER... WE ARE TOO VULNERABLE HERE. THAT CAVE WILL AFFORD US SHELTER...



COME, OLD FRIEND THE NIGHT HAS BEEN HARD ON US BOTH.

WE SHALL SLEEP THE MORNING THROUGH... THEN REFLECT UPON OUR QUEST AT NOON.



BUT WOULD THE BLACK KNIGHT SLEEP SOUNDLY IF HE KNEW THAT HIGH ABOVE HIM CIRCLED MODRED'S OTHER LITTLE PET...



HAVING SURVIVED ITS COLLISION WITH THE HARRIER, EVEN NOW A SMALL SCANNING DEVICE TRANSMITS PICTURES BACK...



...TO MODRED HIMSELF!

SO THE BLACK KNIGHT IS CORNERED! I CAN DISPOSE OF HIM AT MY LEISURE... THEN TURN MY POWERS TO A GREATER GOAL!



MEANWHILE...

I FEAR THIS PLACE WILL NOT DO... WE'LL BE AWASH BY HIGH TIDE... UNLESS...



'TIS AS I THOUGHT THIS PASSAGE LEADS TO HIGHER GROUND PERHAPS...

INDEED IT DOES... AND MORE!



SINCE MY UNKNOWN HOST IS NOT AT HOME I'LL JUST SIT AND WAIT...

NOW WHAT COULD THIS BE? IT'S HEAVY... A WEAPON PERHAPS?



NEXT MOMENT...



THAT NOISE BEHIND ME... WHAT?



TAKEN UNAWARES THE BLACK KNIGHT CRASHED HEAVILY TO THE GROUND...

AND STEELY FINGERS CLOSED AROUND HIS THROAT!

Next: The Stone Killer!

Captain Britain Communications

Our Address:

23 Redan Place, Bayswater, London W2 4SA, England.

Dear Ian,

I have read *Captain Britain* from issue one and, in my view, it is the best comic on the market. I have been a fan of Marvel super-heroes since I first started reading the American comics, such as *Captain America*, and *Spider-Man*. Those comics were very good, but *Captain Britain* adds a new dimension to the word super-hero!

Anyway, down to the nitty-gritty. The *Captain Britain* story has been continuously brilliant, and issue eleven's story – *The House of Baba Yaga* – was no exception. By the way, I think the 'new look' Meggan is a change for the better! *Space Thieves* was very good, but I was disappointed by the ending which, in my opinion, was somewhat boring. However, the *Cherubim* story looks to be a winner, with Quill as my personal favourite. *Abslom Daak* and *Night Raven* both proved to be well worth reprinting.

By the way, why did you change the *Captain Britain* sign from the arms-folded pose to the new corner box?
Nicholas Roberts,
Helade.

The simple answer to that, Nicholas, is – why not? But overall, we thought that the new logo and corner box made the front cover even more dramatic and gripping; and with the quality of our first ten covers, we kinda thought that'd be impossible. And we're glad you're enjoying *Captain Britain*, and the stories therein, because our next letter writer certainly isn't...

Dear All,

Captain Britain 11 has got to be the worst package of trash I have ever read in my life. Okay, I'll admit that the *Cherubim* was much better than *Free-Fall Warriors* (although I still feel that reprints of 1976 *Captain Britain* stories would fill this space better – just to whet our appetites!), BUT, *The House of Baba Yaga* I found to be incredibly offensive. The whole story centred around horror and death, rather than around Good Ol' C.B. and Meggan.

Abslom Daak... Hmmm. This is normally my favourite story, so why did you have to end it? The *Dalek Killer* was developing a nice little team when, suddenly, they were cut off in their prime with their abrupt massacre of the Daleks. Please bring this strip back – your comic won't be the same without it. (Oh yes – and why did Steve Dillon's fantastic artwork come to an end? David Lloyd's was far inferior.)

Okay gang, next complaint coming up! The *Night Raven* strip seems to be dragging on a bit – a new adventure for him would not go amiss. The same goes for the text version, only this I never liked from its beginning. Finally,

(stop that cheering, it's not kind!), I was reading through a comic shop catalogue the other day, when I noticed the following: "Capt. Britain 12 – Captain Britain and Meggan travel to the fifteenth century Peru of the Incas, art and cover by Carlos Ezquerro." Eek! Tell me it's not true! It's not that Carlos is a bad artist, but his style would just not suit *Captain Britain*!

Matthew Pearson,
Gosport.

Ah well, it just goes to prove that you can't please everybody. And Matthew... you can breathe again, C.B. 12 was drawn, as usual, by Alan Davis. Okay?

Dear C.B. Creators,

I am writing to congratulate you on your *Captain Britain* comic (where have you heard

that line before?), which is now my second favourite title. Even though I only started reading it at issue 10, I am hooked. I would like to catch up on a few things, so here are some questions for you:

1) What did Meggan look like before her hair was re-styled? 2) What are her powers? 3) Where does she come from?
J. C. O'Keefe,
No address given.

What do you mean, your second favourite title? Oh well, as you've only been reading for two issues, we confidently predict that C.B. will have become your number one by now! As to your questions... 1) Meggan had more than her hair re-styled, as our picture below will show. 2) The extent and nature of Meggan's powers are not yet known. Meggan herself is still discovering them. 3) Meggan's parents were gypsies, who travelled around from one country to another. Her place of birth is thought to be somewhere in Russia.

Dear Marvel,

I'm just writing to congratulate you on your excellent *Captain Britain* magazine. The C.B. strip is faultless. Jamie Delano's writing is easily better than Alan Moore's, and Alan Davis' art is ace. By now, he is streets ahead of most – if not all – of the Marvel US artists.

Abslom Daak is brilliant, although David Lloyd's art isn't as good as Steve Dillon's. Steve Moore's script is fabulous too. *Night Raven* – hmmm... Could be worse, could be better.

Quite good on the whole, though. *Night Raven* text story – yay! Great to see this in C.B. following the demise of Conan. It is easily far superior to the strip version and carries a lot more weight. I enjoyed *Free-Fall Warriors*, though I'd rather see the Special Executive in place of them.





Paragon of Painthorpe Street – absolutely hilarious! Time and again I have laughed myself silly with the story of Jonah Pringle. Brilliant! City – pathetic. Space Thieves – so funny! I love the dialogue. My only complaint about C.B. is that it is rarely out on time. Apart from that, though, many thanks for a brilliant magazine!

Tom Muir,

Christchurch.

You're welcome, Tom. Sorry about any trouble you (and other readers) have had getting hold of your copy of *Captain Britain*, but for once it's not our fault. Distribution of all Marvel titles is handled by an independent organisation.

Dear Sirs,

It's been a long while since I wrote to Marvel UK. However, I felt I had to comment on your publication. *Captain Britain Monthly* is a must – the lead story is carrying on in a very healthy fashion, as unusual and original as ever. It is a shame that I have seen all the reprints before, however good they are. I wouldn't mind some new Absalom Daak stories, though. The *Night Raven* text story makes a welcome return, and I have very much enjoyed *City and Paragon* in the past. I very much feel there should always be space for a text story.

I didn't think the *Free-Fall Warriors* lived up to expectations, I found it quite boring. *Space Thieves*, however, was very good, and the *Cherubim* is even better – and that's just after a single episode! How about a new strip featuring the defunct Jackdaw?

Tony Amis,
Hatfield.

Well, we don't think so. Tony. After all, Jackdaw died way back in *Marvel Super Heroes* 387. Who ever heard of a dead character coming back to life? Er... well... apart from *Captain Britain* (twice), that is...

Dear Ian and Simon,

What are you doing to *Captain Britain*? Wait, though – before you discard this letter saying: 'Oh no, not another bring back the old costume/Alan Moore diatribe!' (this, of course, loftily assumes that the C.B. team ever use words like diatribe!), please read on. I'm not criticising the storyline, the artwork, or the script – all of which, I might add, have

maintained one of the highest standards in comics today – but rather the ineffectual, bumbling and wishy-washy character that *Captain Britain* presents on the written/drawn page.

Just take a look at his American counterpart... you never see *Captain America* trussed up like a prize turkey at Thanksgiving, (notice I've got my American hat firmly in place as I write this!), hanging upside down and whimpering, "Help me, Nomad" (for whoever his side-kick is these days). You don't see America's flag-bearer lost for words, clutching a bottle in one hand, while a subversive organisation calmly takes over his home, virtually booting him out onto the street. No, he'd have been contracting his muscles while those tree roots wrapped around him, so that when he was dragged down to meet Baba Yaga he could (in true 'Good home cooking and Mom's apple pie' fashion) expand them-bursting free, while at the same time, giving the RCX a twenty balloon thesis on why their way is the wrong way. The net result being, of course, that Baba Yaga would turn herself in – renouncing her life of black magic, etc., and the RCX would see the error of their ways and go back to being used car salesmen.

Before the howls of protest start pouring in from people who think I'm trying to get the sort of pap you tend to read in *Captain America* and its ilk in *Captain Britain* – I'm not. What I'm trying to say – in incredibly long-winded fashion – is: "For God's sake, let *Captain Britain* win a fight – on his own!" Phew – well, I feel better for letting all that out of my system... how about it?

Chris Francis,

Penge.

Okay.

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**Forget Da Untouchables...
Forget Da Godfather...**

Next Issue: Captain Britain And Meggan- GANGSTERS!

It's true – she's the moll with brains and looks, he's the heavy, dull-witted but deadly! And their Godfather is none other than Dal Thomas! Just what is going on? Be here in one month's time for the explanation and a Christmas story with more wrapping up than the family's presents!

Should Auld Acquaintance...
is a special thirteen page story – written and drawn by Alan Davis!



The Mysterious NIGHT-RAVEN

Script: Steve Parkhouse

Art: David Lloyd

NIGHT-TIME IN THE CITY...AND IN THE CRIME FEATURES OFFICE OF THE CITY NEWSPAPER, THE SENTINEL, ACE REPORTER SCOOP DAILY RECEIVES THE LATEST BRIEF FROM HIS EDITOR...



AND SO, LATER THAT NIGHT, SCOOP FOUND HIMSELF OUTSIDE A SMALL HOTEL IN A SEEDY, RUN-DOWN PART OF TOWN...





THE FIRST STEP INTO THE MURKY DEPTHS OF THE CITY'S UNDERWORLD... WHERE MANY MEN HAD STUMBLERD, AND SO FEW MEN HAD RETURNED!



SCOOP LURCHED THROUGH A MAZE OF ALLEYWAYS... BEHIND EVERY DOOR, AROUND EVERY CORNER... THERE LURKED DANGER!

"I'M LOST... HOPELESSLY LOST... I CAN'T FIND MY WAY OUT!"



"HEY, BUDDY! GOT ANY DOUGH? SQUARE A DOLLAR OR TWO FOR A GUY WHO'S DOWN ON HIS LUCK?"

"C'MON, MISTER! COUGH UP... FAST!"

"NO, PLEASE, I..."



"COME ON, HAND IT OVER... OR SO HELP ME, I'LL..."

"NO 'HELP'... POLICE!"



THEN HEADLIGHTS PIERCED THE GLOOM, AND THE SOUND OF A POWERFUL ENGINE THAUMMED IN SCOOP'S EARS...

"HELP! OVER HERE! HELP ME!"



GUNSHOTS FLARED IN THE DARKNESS... BULLETS WHINED AND BACCHETTED OFF WALLS AS A HUGE CAR ROARED PAST THE HELPLESS SCOOP!

BLAM!
RATATATATAT!

"GOOD GRIEF! WHAT'S HAPPENING?"



THEN CAME A POLICE CAR IN HOT PURSUIT... SIRENS WAILING, IT TOO SAILED PAST SCOOP... THE POLICE MEN IGNORING HIS CRIES FOR HELP!

KROW!

"STOP! DON'T PASS ME BY! DON'T LEAVE ME HERE!"



THE GUNSHOTS FADED INTO SILENCE... AND A NEW SOUND REACHED SCOOP'S EARS, THE HEAVY MUFFLED RHYTHM OF SLOWLY BEATING WINGS...



AND A HUGE SHADOW PASSED OVER THE CITY... ON OUTSTRETCHED WINGS A NIGHTMARISH SHAPE, FLEW OVERHEAD... THE SHAPE OF...



NIGHT RAVEN!



NO !!! I'M NOT THE ONE YOU WANT... I'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG! PUT ME DOWN... IT WASN'T ME !!!

AAAAAAAGH!

THEN SCOOP AWOKES...WITH A SCREAM RINGING IN HIS EARS...



LEAVE ME ALONE I'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG... IT WASN'T ME...



OH, LORD...IT WAS A DREAM! I MUST HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP AND HAD A NIGHTMARE!

THANK GOODNESS FOR THAT...I THOUGHT I WAS A GONER!



AAAAAAAGH!

IT WASN'T JUST IN MY DREAM! I DID HEAR A SCREAM...AND IT CAME FROM DOWNSTAIRS!



THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON DOWN THERE...AND THERE MAY BE A STORY IN IT. SO I'LL TAKE MY CAMERA, JUST IN CASE...



SCOOP LOOKED DOWN ONTO THE HOTEL LOBBY... AND SURE ENOUGH...

I WAS RIGHT! IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF ROBBERY GOING ON DOWN THERE!

SHUT UP WITH THAT SCREAMING! JUST HAND OVER THE MONEY AND YOU WON'T GET HURT!



YOU HEARD WHAT THE MAN SAID...HAND OVER YOUR TAKINGS. OR I'LL VENTILATE YOUR VEST!

OKAY, OKAY... DON'T POINT THAT THING AT ME...IT MAKES ME NERVOUS!



SCOOP LINED UP HIS CAMERA ON ONE OF THE CROOKS IN THE LOBBY...

WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY...A PICTURE OF AN ACTUAL CRIME TAKING PLACE! THE POLICE WOULD GIVE ANYTHING FOR EVIDENCE LIKE THIS!



NEXT MOMENT, SCOOP HAD THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE!

HOLY SMOKE, SCOOP...LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN!

Next: **Flashpoint!**

Flying was the best bit. The rest of it was fraught with more misery and self pity than the entire recorded output of Les Smiths, assembled together on one very long LP. Brawls and rescues and yelling and constant travel filled his waking hours and left him too tense to sleep properly.

In fact, all things considered, the life of a superhero was, to be quite frank, a complete and utter living hell.

Except for the flying . . .

Nursing a profound depression, Captain Granbretan angled his body for a high dive into a cloud bank. It was wet in the clouds but the skin of liquid that daubed itself onto his costume was rapidly vaporised by the speed of his descent. Still air became a gale force wind in his face as he accelerated. Below him, the greys and greens of Londra and the Home Counties sprawled, like the palette of an indecisive artist.

Reckless, the Captain fell like a kamikaze angel, with sonic booms attending his plunge through strata of air. As the altitude diminished, Londra began to look exactly the way it did in the A-Z guidebook. Hundreds of feet dropped away in seconds. Details became distinct; cars moving on streets, flags catching breezes, windows filled with reflected sky. The ground slammed towards him like an awesome stop sign. It obliterated the horizon, became a rushing wall of implacable force that could shatter him like a bug on a windscreen. Concrete, cars, the dirt on the road. He closed his eyes.

And twenty feet above the tarmac of the Rue Lafayette, Captain Granbretan pulled out of his powerdive, slipping free of gravity's grasp with insolent ease. As he curved back up, drawing a perfect parabola in the air, his stomach somersaulted.

He sailed up over the Park, his smile fading as he recalled his duties. Flying was definitely the best bit.

As he often did, the Captain sat, surveying the rooftops from the top of Napoleon's Column. As a matter of fact, this was something he did so often, that tourists now expected to see him manning his post at least once a day. There was even a postcard, in which he appeared atop the Column, looking for all the world like an oversized roosting pigeon.

He hated that photograph; for some reason, at the exact moment it had been taken, he was musing on what it would be like to bite down into a slug while eating spaghetti. The expression evoked by this thought was immortalised forever on a thousand postcards.

Captain Granbretan sighed. There were few tourists in the Square now and most of those ignored him, leaving the remainder to hurl whatever timid abuse they could muster. He no longer cared what they thought of him.

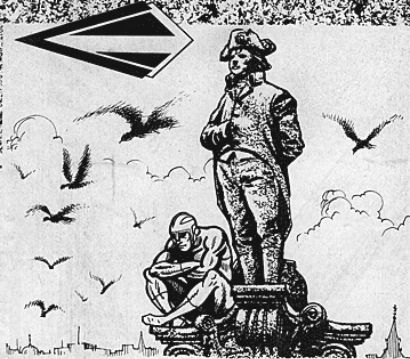
In a dispirited sky, the sun played hide-and-seek behind grey clouds. On the roads, car horns bleated and drivers swore. Somewhere a bird began to sing and then thought better of it.

It was all very depressing.

Suddenly, the Captain felt the crew-cut hair bristle on his scalp as the circuitry in his helmet, interfacing with his brain's own electrical fields, sent alarm shivers down through his neurones. The distress call crackled and snapped across the lacework microcomputer he wore, bringing with it a low, buzzing headache. He was receiving fewer and fewer distress calls every day and he decided to ignore

**Captain
GRANBRETAN**





this one as he had the rest. He'd had enough.

As if in response to his reluctance, the pain in his head cranked up a notch or two until his helmet felt like a vice, pressuring his skull. The only cure for the pain was to fly out of range of the distress call.

The Captain leapt from Napoleon's Column, pivoted in the air and rocketed north-west, away from the insistent maydew. Below him, the buildings of Londra thinned away into fields and hedgerows. At last, even the ordered, lemon-green geometry of the agricultural belt broke into jigsaw pieces, to be replaced by moorland.

Captain Granbretan knew his destination now. It would end as it had begun, in the place of power.

Darkmoor was a circle of neolithic stones which straddled a major ley line intersection. Although neither as impressive as Stonehenge nor as extensive as Avebury, the site enjoyed a certain notoriety as one of the more bizarre prehistoric monuments in the Republic of Granbretan. If the sightings were to be believed, Darkmoor was visited annually by enough alien spacecraft to populate a good-sized video game. According to the Aethyr Society, Jesus made frequent pilgrimages there from his home on Venus. Witches came to Darkmoor also, to celebrate their four major festivals, as did a few latterday druids. (Clashes of interest and ideology were not unknown.) Ghosts, too, were seen on a regular basis and on one memorable occasion, a coachload of tourists from the American Confederation witnessed what was apparently a rather uninhibited manifestation of Cer-

runnos, the Horned God of the Celts.

By far the strangest of all the curious events scattered throughout Darkmoor's history, however, was the discovery, by a college student named Paul Peltier, of a uniform bearing the three colours of Granbretan. Draped like an exhausted fleg over the centre stone, the costume had seemed almost to cry out to the young man, urging him to take it up and put it on.

It fitted him so well, that his body appeared to have been painted in red, white and blue. Then, as it moulded itself to his skin, the costume began to effect the first of many changes upon his anatomy. It replaced months of bodybuilding with minutes of magic; sculpting Peltier's muscles; trimming excess weight; shifting and relocating bone structure; even eliminating lurking insects. When it had done this, it boosted his abilities, dressed him in a powerful forcefield, cut him free from gravity's anchor and waited to see what he would do.

What Paul Peltier did, of course, was to become a superhero. He'd always fancied the idea of having superpowers, like the characters in the *Bandes Dessinees* he'd read as a child. It was even better than being a pop singer or starring in films.

With visions of fame and money and girls jostling for space in his imagination, Captain Granbretan had taken to the sky on that first day of his new life, never suspecting what lay ahead.

And now he was returning to that place. To the ring of stones. He tacked along an aircurrent, face to the setting sun. Then he floated down and the turf rose to meet him.

The stones of Darkmoor loitered, like street corner louts, ignoring the flirtatious breezes that vied for their atten-

tions. The colours of the sky deepened. Clouds, blown westward, began to smoulder in the last light. The wind in the moorgrass sounded like the long pull and release of an invisible giant's breath. For miles around, the moors were empty; a vast, unfurnished room.

If ever a country were set aside solely for the inhabitation of depressives, it would look very much the way Darkmoor looked that evening.

Well pleased with the way the environment harmonised with his mood, Captain Granbretan sat against a menhir and considered his predicament.

It had all started out so well; he had done all those things expected of a superhero and had gained both fame and respect. As for money, however, he soon came to realise that superheroes were looked upon as charitable institutions.

There was one occasion when a man, recently rescued from a blazing building, had gratefully babbled, 'Captain Grenbretan, how can I ever thank you?'

The Captain's three-figure reply was greeted with outrage.

Nor was his luck any better where girls were concerned; most were too much in awe of his powers to even dare blow him kisses – and he was far too tired to respond to the overtures of those women who did actively pursue him.

In the end, all he really had was a dreadful, crushing responsibility.

It had to stop. Here. Now. A light rain began to fall. It settled against his forcefield and evaporated there. He thought the forcefield away and let the rain drift, cold, against his face. The suit had to go; there was no alternative. He would miss the flying but that was a small price to pay for a normal life.

He lifted his hands to the helmet.

'Stop! Pull yourself together, Paul!' Captain Granbretan whirled, reactivating his protective field, ready for attack. But there was nothing – only weathered stone and desolate acres. He was almost ready to believe in the ghosts of Darkmoor, when the voice spoke up again. This time it was accompanied by a familiar tingling in his skull.

'I've really had enough of this nonsense!'

'Who are you?' said the Captain, as the voice echoed away through the chambers of his mind.

'Who do you think I am?' said the voice irritably. 'I'm your helmet. Don't tell me you don't recognise me. We've been wearing each other for a year and a half!'

'Oh my God,' the Captain said. 'Well, I wouldn't put it quite so extravagantly,' the helmet sparked, 'but I am pretty special.'

'What do you want?' asked Captain Granbretan, beginning to feel unpleasantly like a character in a play by Harold Pinter at his most obtuse.

The helmet considered. 'Well, I want to convince you not to take me off. I mean, where will you get another off-the-peg that fits as well as I do? And anyway, do you really want to have to walk home in the nude?'

"What else? What else do you want?" the Captain said, his voice trembling. "Ah! Well, now we come to it, Paul," the helmet answered. "I want action, that's what! I want excitement! I was made to fulfil certain specific functions, which are no longer being fulfilled." The voice rose in pitch, making the Captain's hair feel like a nest of ants. "Basically, I demand the right to work!"

"I don't understand."

"That much is obvious," the helmet observed. "Listen, I was designed to be a superhero's battlesuit. You are not allowing me to exercise my full potential. Instead of saving lives and averting disasters, you spend all your time moaning about how difficult your life is. Well, I'm bored! It's time you thought about me for a change. I gave you marvellous powers and now I'm asking for something in return."

The Captain began to perspire. "Why haven't you mentioned any of this before?"

"I couldn't. I've only just developed consciousness," the helmet said. "Probably as a result of having nothing better to do."

"But surely you can see things from my point of view," the Captain pleaded. "I can't go on like this. Do you realise how much crime there is in this world? How many earthquakes and oil slicks and air crashes there are? How many wars and riots? How much terrorism? I'm only one man. I'm expected to sort everything out on my own, because of these powers, but there's just me, you know? I can't deal with it all."

He almost wept as he delivered this impassioned speech, but the helmet's web of miraculous circuitry reached, with electronic fingers, into the arterial baroreceptors of his brain and altered his emotional responses, as easily as someone might change channels on a television.

"Calm down, Paul," the helmet soothed. "There are two of us now. Me and you."

"And people are beginning to resent me," Captain Granbretan continued. "Londra Match ran a two-page article, criticising me. 'Head in the Clouds', it was called. They don't understand what I go through. I can't stand the constant pressure. That's why I have to take you off. My life's not my own any more."

"That's true," the helmet said simply, and a fine chill crept up the ladder of the Captain's vertebrae.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"I think it's time we got back to work, Paul. Don't you? We can talk about this later."

"No! Wait," the Captain said, panicking. He reached up to tear the helmet off and the nerves went dead in his fingers. "What are you doing to me?" he whimpered.

"I'm willing to give this relationship another try," the helmet said.

The Captain's arms thrashed uselessly in the air, as though swatting at unseen flies. He very much wanted to collapse but the suit held him up and would not let his knees bend. Jailed in his own clothing, Captain Granbretan felt the





ground fall away from his feet.

"Come fly with me, come fly, let's fly away..." the helmet hummed tonelessly. "You like Frank Sinatra, don't you Paul?" it asked, not waiting for a reply. "How about this one?" It took an electronic breath and began. "I've got you, under my skin..."

Captain Granbretan started to scream. The helmet slammed his teeth together and shut him up.

"You don't like singing?" it said breezily. "Oh well. Suits me. Hahl! That's a sort of joke, isn't it? Suits. I can see things are going to be so much different now, Paul. So much better."

"I want a divorce," the Captain telepathed desperately. The helmet silenced him and flew him south, a hijacked prisoner, to where Londra's lights stained the night sky red.

Le Soleil was the first of the tabloids to print the soon-to-be-famous photograph of Captain Granbretan carrying a

stricken Concorde to safety. Under the headline, "Plane Sailing: Cap back in action", the newspaper story detailed the rescue and congratulated the Captain on his "complete recovery".

In one fell swoop, Captain Granbretan was reinstated in the affections of the Republic. By the end of that week, his tireless efforts had boosted his popularity into the stratosphere. It seemed that no emergency was too small or too great for the Captain's attention; from kittens trapped in trees to foundering oil tankers, Captain Granbretan was there to save the day.

As he was again, when a train derailed in the Londra Metro. Shifting tons of dirt and debris with superhuman ease, he unblocked the tunnel and freed the survivors. Shortly afterwards, while he ferried the injured out to a waiting ambulance team, only five people noticed how pale and tired the Captain looked, and those five simply put it down to dedication to duty. No-one at all commented on his silence. After all, the best heroes are men of few words.

Captain Granbretan removed the twisted train, repaired the track with the hammers of his fists and then hurtled off in response to his distress bleeper. As he arced up and out of the Metro station, he

whirled into a victory roll over the heads of a cheering, tearful congregation.

Captain Granbretan was back with a vengeance.

Among the clouds, gliding through shoals of cirro-stratus, the helmet chattered to itself. The sound was rapid and self-important, like a roomful of busy typewriters. The helmet had begun to detect a bad smell and it was wondering what to do about Paul Peltier.

It knew it could animate him for only so long, before his glassy eyes and decomposing flesh gave the whole game away. A current of thought flickered through the computer network impregnated into the fabric of the helmet, and a decision was made.

Darkmoor. It would return to Darkmoor, digest Peltier's body and then wait. Someone would eventually turn up — someone who'd always fancied the idea of superpowers and whose body could be easily reshaped to fill the hollow spaces of the wonderful costume.

It was the flying; that, more than anything else, was what snared them.

Happy again, the real Captain Granbretan swooped and soared and sailed, then settled gently in a ring of stones. And began to feed.



The End

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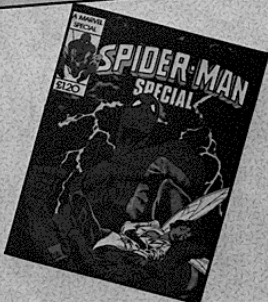
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CON 85

MARVEL at the UK COMIC ART CONVENTION

On the weekend of September 21st/22nd, the University of London Union played host to one of the largest gatherings of comic creators, fans and dealers seen in Britain for quite some time. The aim of the convention was to provide a showcase for the very best in the world of comics, and then to donate any profits made through the sale of tickets to charity. The guest list read like a Who's Who of British comic notables, with special guests from both Marvel and D.C. in the States. That list included Dave Gibbons, Alan Davis, Steve Moore, Marv Wolfman and Bill Sienkiewicz, to mention but a few.

From left to right: Kev Hopgood, Celn Ridout (standing), Lynn Taylor, Simon Furman, Carl Potts (snapping back) and Bill Sienkiewicz.



Marvel UK were there in force on the Saturday, with a display of artwork and the intention to get as many of our artists and writers to sit and talk to fans, and give advice/opinions on the artwork of young hopefuls. Our special guests from Marvel US were Bill Sienkiewicz, whose breathtaking artwork has graced the pages of Moon Knight and the New Mutants, and Carl Potts, who as well as editing several titles, also finds time to write and draw. After a busy afternoon of chatting and signing, the next event that required Marvel's presence was a question and answer panel. The line-up on that included Captain Britain creators Alan Davis and Jamie Delano, Space Thieves artist Kev Hopgood - artists on Ridgway and Kev Hopgood - artists on Doctor Who and Zoids respectively. A lively hour of discussion followed, which was enjoyed by both audience and panel alike.



Against a backdrop of Marvel artwork, Captain Britain Assistant Editor - Simon Furman, Carl Potts, and Space Thieves artist Barry Kitson, prepare to meet their public.

The whole weekend must be adjudged a great success, for not only did it go a long way to making comics a less imperious business - with fans at last able to put faces to names - but also, thanks to the sale of artwork donated for the occasion, it raised over £2,000 which will go to help the starving millions in Ethiopia.

Photographs by Steve Cook.

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